**Lesson Plan Civil War: Face Jug**

Examining the significance of an African-American artifact.

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**Civil War: Face Jug**

**Materials**

Pen, paper, computer, PowerPoint software, Internet, [Detective Technique Guide: Conducting Historical Research](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/going-back-in-time/), [Detective Technique Guide: Examining Artwork](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/1000-words/)   
  
**Related Episode**

A ceramic jug found in Germantown, PA turns out to be an example of a significant 19th century protective relic and piece of art — a face jug — created by African American slaves and freedmen in the Edgefield District of South Carolina.

**Video:**  
*Face Jug*  
  
What does this ceramic face reveal about a captive people's search for identity?

**Estimated Time Required**  
  
2-3 class periods   
  
**Grades**  
  
6-12  
  
**Objective**

In this lesson, students research the face jug, a 19th century art form that formed a bridge between African American freedmen and their African pasts. They then create four panel comics that depict their historical and contemporary significance.   
  
**Before Viewing**

Ask students to brainstorm a list of good luck objects, totems, or symbols in different cultures. Write their list of objects on the board and have students discuss the symbolic and literal value of these objects.   
  
Alternatively, you might wish to share the following items from this list of good luck signs from around the world with students and ask students to discuss the significance of each one:

* Dreamcatcher
* Red lantern
* Horsheshoe
* Coins
* Evil eye amulet

Tell students they are going to watch an episode of History Detectives which is about an object that had deep cultural significance to African Americans in the 19th century.   
  
**Activity**

After they have watched the History Detectives episode, “Face Jug”, tell students that they are going to be investigating the face jug, a type of 19th century pottery created by African American slaves and freedmen in the Edgefield District of South Carolina. [Share this PowerPoint presentation about face jugs](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fteacherweb.com%2FFL%2FBuckLakeElementarySchool%2FArt%2FFaceJugsrevised_short.ppt&rct=j&q=face%20jug%20powerpoint&ei=cfpgTuy6BunI0AGH6qEq&usg=AFQjCNGqxSDoGW1qHNBKRfjbQuVp6oPFlg&sig2=X7dlvD2_c2MW7y04ueTi9g&cad=rja) with your students. It provides useful background information about and visual examples of South Carolina face jugs.   
  
Divide students into groups of three or four. Each group will research an aspect of the face jug, then create a four panel comic strip collage about it using words, illustrations, and images of face jugs.

**Option 1: Dave the Slave**  
  
One of the best known face jug potters from the Edgefield District was a man named “Dave.” His pots and jugs were immense in size and notable for their handwritten inscriptions, which were often couplets. Ask students to research his significance and relevance using the [Detective Technique Guide: Conducting Historical Research](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/technique-guide/going-back-in-time/) and the following resources:

* [Dave the Potter](http://www.usca.edu/aasc/davepotter.htm) – a biographical article
* [Dave the Slave](http://www.davetheslave.org) – a website which features his work and examples of his writing.
* [Edgefield Pottery District](http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/Edgefield/) – a compilation of research sites from the University of Illinois

After completing their research, students should complete this [graphic organizer reflection sheet](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/unit_reflection_sheet.pdf) which invites them to consider the relevance of this art form in the context of their lives. (This part of the activity will involve about 15-30 minutes of discussion time.)   
  
Finally, they should create a four panel comic about Dave the Potter’s life and work using [this template](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/four_panel_jamcomic.pdf) created by Jeff Sharp, an educator and member of Maryland's Comic Book Initiative. Encourage them to use his couplets and inscriptions in the comic book text to tell a story as well as to include images of his jugs and any illustrations they find of his likeness.

**Option Two: Contemporary Face Jugs**  
  
Tell students that several contemporary artists still create face jugs, either as an expression of their connection to their ancestry or as a decorative folk art using the original methods.   
  
Invite them to research one of the following artists and if possible, to interview them using Detective Technique Guide: Examining Artwork:

* [Jim McDowell](http://www.blackpotter.com/), an African American potter who creates face jugs inspired by Dave the Potter.
* Steven Ferrell, owner of Old Edgefield Pottery and Smithsonian consultant. See related [Augusta Chronicle news article](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/09/02/met_546619.shtml) and [Vimeo](http://vimeo.com/2495030) video.
* [Gary Dexter](http://madpotter-oldcanalpottery.blogspot.com/), potter who was featured in History Detectives.

After completing their research, students should complete this [graphic organizer reflection sheet](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/unit_reflection_sheet.pdf) which invites them to consider the relevance of this art form in the context of their lives. (This part of the activity will involve about 15-30 minutes of discussion time.)   
  
Finally, they should work together to create a four panel comic titled “Why I Make Face Jugs,” “A Day in an Artist’s Life” or “Artist’s Statement” about the artist they’ve researched. They should use [this template](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/handouts/four_panel_jamcomic.pdf%20) created by Jeff Sharp, an educator and member of Maryland's Comic Book Initiative. Encourage students to use quotes from their research or interviews in the comic book text to convey the artist’s creative goals, and to cut and paste images of face jugs and of the artists in the comic panels.   
  
When students have completed their research and created their comic panels, display them in the classroom and invite each group to make an oral presentation about their research and comic story. The resulting comics, which look like graphic collages, will allow students to visually examine the styles and ranges of face jugs that have been created.

**Ask:**

What did you discover through your research that surprised you? How is the face jug an important aspect of African American culture? How have they evolved and stayed the same? What is the value of preserving the method of making the face jug?

**Going Further**  
  
Have students select an artifact or object that represents good luck in their family because it represents a direct connection to their past. Have them conduct an interview with the owner(s) of this object, then transcribe and edit it into a 250-300 word oral history. Create a classroom blog using [blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) where students can post and share a photograph of the object along with the oral histories.

**Related Resources**

[Edgefield Pottery](http://www.edgefieldpottery.org/)

[Encyclopedia Smithsonian: American Face Vessels](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmah/facevess.htm)

[Video: Steve Ferrell of Old Edgefield Potter recounts the life of Dave the Potter](http://vimeo.com/2495030)

[Teaching with Comics Resource Page](http://www.flummery.com/teaching/) which also includes a comic evaluation rubric

[Philadelphia Inquirer: A “face jug” sparks big excitement](http://www.philly.com/philly/living/20100328_A__quot_face_jug_quot__sparks_big_excitement.html)

[Antique Roadshow: Lanier Meaders Face Jug appraisal](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/200701A28.html)